



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 21 December 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
21 DECEMBER 1968

1. Brazil

The outlook for stability is getting bleaker.

Just what individual or group among the military leadership is running the government is not clear.

there are at least three contending groups emerging among the generals.

Two groups, one relatively moderate, and one on the conservative side, apparently are trying to keep the extreme hard-liners from increasing their power through harsh new repressions.

Some moderate officers are said to believe that the military's actions of the past week have united nearly all elements in the country against the government, leaving President Costa e Silva too narrow a power base to survive for long.

2. Argentina

The navy has embarked on a program of expansion and modernization. Following the acquisition of a Dutch World War II - type aircraft carrier, the Argentines have announced purchase of two 1,100-ton submarines from West Germany. The next step is likely to be the acquisition of a modern English destroyer.

The procurement of such hardware could run afoul of the Conte-Long and Symington amendments and threaten the future of limited US technical aid to Argentina, with all the undesirable consequences to our relations this would entail.

3. Peru

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The junta in Peru has recently established relations with Rumania and has announced its intention to open diplomatic ties with Yugoslavia. Lima has commercial relations with Czechoslovakia and has proposed reopening diplomatic contacts with Prague and Warsaw.

4. Laos

As reported in yesterday's Brief, Phou Pha Thi, the radar post lost to the enemy last March, was retaken on 19 December. The fight was a literal cliff-hanger.

Phou Pha Thi sits on a rugged mountain top on which the Communist defenders were well dug in, firing down point blank at Meo guerrilla attackers. When the attack stalled near the top, General Vang Pao, military leader of all the Meo irregulars in Laos, promised an instant field commission to anyone who would strap 20 hand grenades on himself and attack the enemy bunkers. He got two volunteers who climbed to the bunkers and silenced them. At that point, the main body of Meo charged for the top and chased the enemy off.

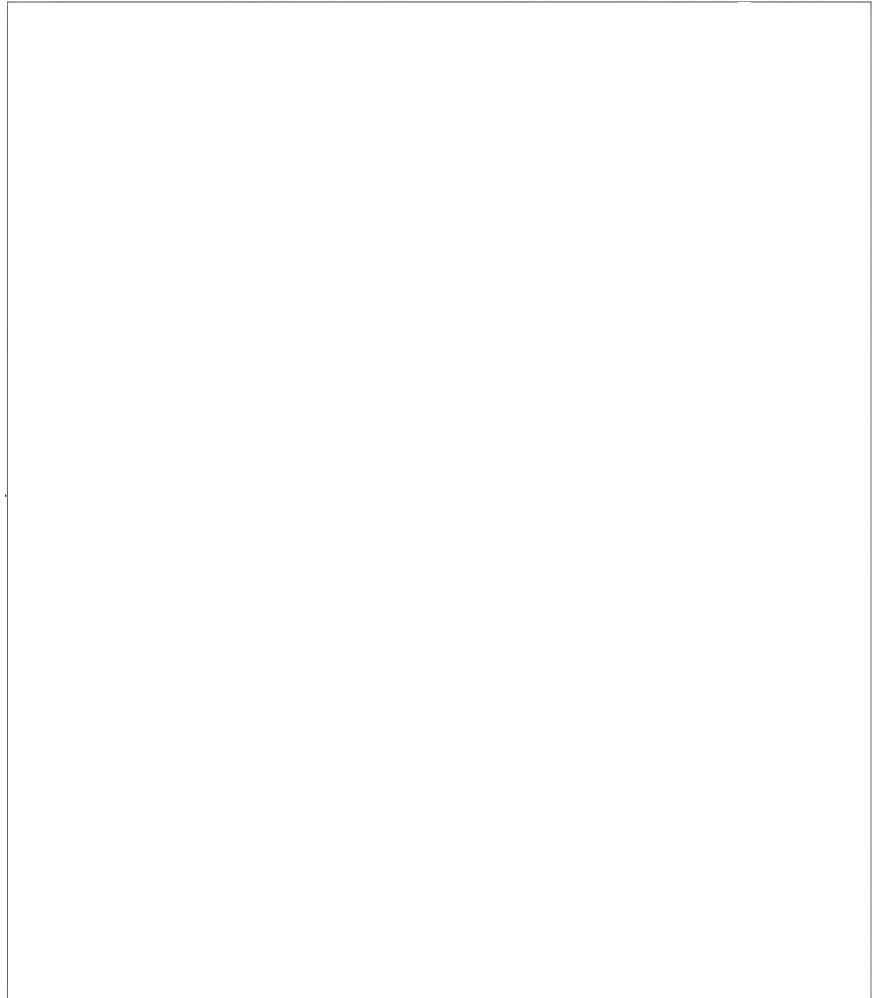
The Communists are moving reinforcements into the area, however, and the government's possession of Phou Pha Thi may be disputed again by next week.

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5. South Vietnam

A continued examination of intelligence bearing on Communist units in the Demilitarized Zone suggests that probably no more than two company-sized units are currently involved.

6. West Europe



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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

On Secretary Clifford: So far, Hanoi has not commented publicly on the Secretary's remarks. The Front did, however, on 19 December, but was unable to rationalize the possibility of differences between Washington and Saigon with the "US puppet" theme. The Front commentary chose to ignore that issue. Instead, it focused on other aspects of the Secretary's comments and used these as an excuse for the standard diatribe against US "aggression." The Secretary, in fact, was characterized as just another apologist for Saigon's obstructionism.

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Front Anniversary Yesterday: The Communists are getting considerable political support from their allies on the occasion of the Liberation Front's 8th anniversary. The Vietnamese have publicized the event with important celebrations in both North and South Vietnam. In Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh himself turned out for the celebration. The main theme of the Vietnamese celebrations was determination to continue or even step up the fighting until the Americans withdraw.

Peking staged rallies and sent congratulatory messages with its usual militant warning that the Front could count on Chinese support so long as the Communists "persisted in a protracted war." The Soviet message of congratulations focused on supporting the Communist objectives at the peace talks.

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Vinh Airfield: There is now strong evidence that the Communists plan to conduct air operations from Vinh airfield in the near future.

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shipped south by train. Increasing amounts of rough lumber used in the construction of concrete forms are also being transported into the city.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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